

JOHN, YOKO AND THE FBI • THE NEXT CHIAPAS

In These Times

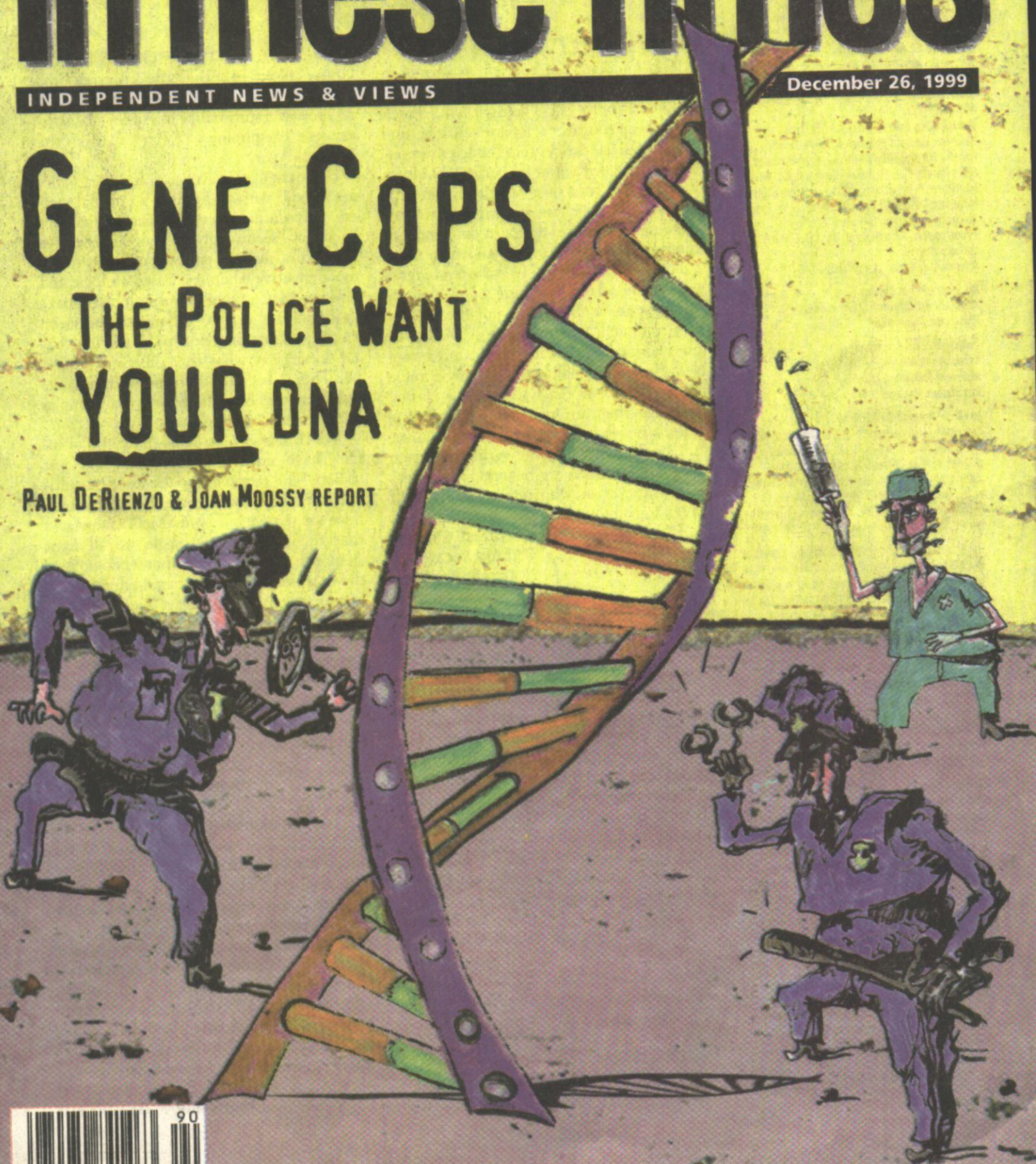
INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

December 26, 1999

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PAUL DERIENZO & JOAN MOOSSY REPORT



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In These Times

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"... with liberty and justice for all"

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Letters

Who's Left?

John Gardner, not the left, is wrong on vouchers ("The Left is Wrong on Vouchers," Nov. 14). The right-wing attack on public education is unrelenting, and vouchers are at the center. The left's responsibility must be to fight for better schools for all children, not just a small minority. Pushing for vouchers is simply a way of avoiding the more difficult challenge of improving education for all students.

The crisis facing public school students will not be solved by taking a few students with aggressive parents out of the system. In fact, that leaves the schools with even fewer advocates to deal with the most troubled students. Public schools need more funding for more teachers, smaller classes, buildings that are not falling apart and more services for at-risk students. Calling for vouchers accepts the right's assertion that public schools are beyond repair. Let's hope those of us who remain on the left haven't given up yet.

Jesse Sharkey
Chicago Vocational
Career Academy
Chicago

Three questions: How did John Gardner become a member of the Milwaukee Public School Board? Does that board know that Gardner considers public schools "juvenile warehouses" inferior to any private school? Why did a liberal magazine like *In These Times* print such nonsense? Any other school board member of any public school will explain why vouchers will weaken already insufficiently supported public schools. You owe all readers an apology—and a pink slip (or at least a lesson on divisiveness) to the editor who selected that right-wing propaganda.

Milton Aronson
St. Pete Beach, Florida

Editor's note: Milwaukee voters have twice elected John Gardner to the only at-large seat on the Milwaukee School Board.

God Crazy

O.K., I get that Eugene McCarraher didn't like Wendy Kaminer's *Sleeping with*

Extra-Terrestrials ("The Gods Must Be Crazy," Nov. 14). But, the only reason I could come up with is that her view on religion and spirituality in Americans society is "blasphemy." What is this, the Middle Ages?

He doesn't get it. Religion and spirituality are at odds with reason and a rational society. Advocating something because it "feels good" or "seems right" is not an effective method of making policy. Policy is much more effective when it is based on logic and reason. McCarraher smirks at Kaminer's inability to see a difference between Heaven's Gate and organized religion, but he doesn't say what that difference might be. This is because there is no difference. Adherence to blind faith is just as wrong as adherence to blind social policy.

"All things secular, democratic and rational" have created a more fair and just society. The rational impulse must be cultivated to a higher degree and by more people if we are to save ourselves. McCarraher says that the progressive struggle we all fight "requires religious hope that encompasses the most severe and most exalted visions of human possibility." What a load of crap. It requires dedication to the fact that a more equitable society is a safer and healthier society than a less equitable society.

Religion and spirituality might inspire McCarraher, but they have no place in the public forum. Which, after all, is Kaminer's thesis.

Linda S. Mastellone
Huntington, West Virginia

I left the Roman Catholic Church and Christianity as a teen-ager because of the smug, vicious theology suggested in Eugene McCarraher's writing. This leftist feels tempted to say, to both atheists and theists: "A pox on all your houses!" Reality is far more subtle and complex than this game of philosophical one-upmanship that secularists and religionists play. The secular left and the religious left need each other, the former perhaps more than the latter. Both lefts should try to recognize and respect each other's intellectual and cosmological differences.

Barry Hart
Somerville, Massachusetts

In These Times

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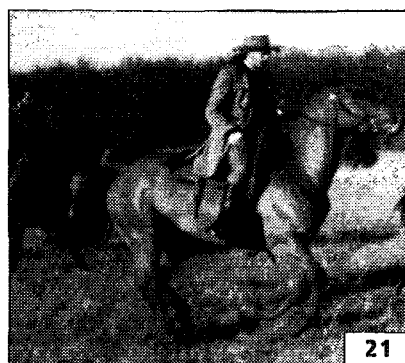
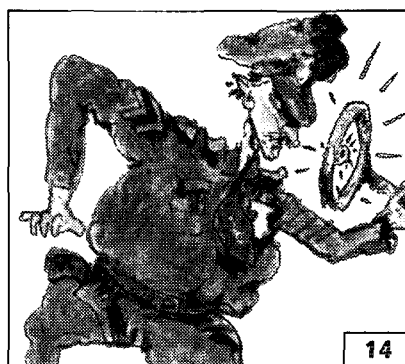
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Throw another cookie on the fire.



Cover by Jim Rinnert and Agoston Szuts

All Aboard

The Progressive Caucus Economic Human Rights Bus Tour Leaves the Station

EATONTON, GA.

Harry Belafonte is back. "Once again, here come these Yankee niggers from the north with their Communist principles disturbing our tranquillity of life," Belafonte tells the country folks in the pews of the Jefferson Baptist Church. They laugh. It's been decades since Belafonte, 72, first came to Georgia to put his famous face on the front-line fight for social justice.

His message hasn't changed much. The civil rights movement may have buried Jim Crow, but the American dream continues to bypass millions of Americans, both black and white.

Out front, a sheriff's deputy is parked, lights flashing, keeping an eye on things. He's here not to harass, but to direct traffic around the arrival of the Congressional Progressive Caucus' Economic Human Rights Bus Tour and attendant media caravan. The bus tour, which visited Atlanta and its rural environs on Nov. 11 and 12, was organized by the Institute for Policy Studies and Food First in cooperation with the 55-member Progressive Caucus. Unexpectedly, the House was still in session, which cut into congressional attendance. However Rep. Barbara Lee (D-Calif.) and Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.) did embark. Rep. Cynthia McKinney (D-Ga.), home with the flu, sent her mother and aunt.

The tour aims to give some cohesion to the diffuse American left by forging links between the caucus, national policy research institutes, local grassroots groups and poor people's movements. "It's an infrastructure problem," says Chuck Collins of the Boston-based United for a Fair Economy. "There is all this activity at the local level, there are the national leadership groups, and there is the Progressive Caucus in Congress, but there is a disconnect between them all."

To remedy that situation, the coordinators of this progressive road show have adopted human rights as an overarching framework that they think can bring these disconnected political players together. Anuradha Mittal of Food First puts it this way: "A growing grassroots movement is reshaping the political environment and putting human rights on the agenda."

The idea is to recast the popular definition of human rights to include not just civil and political rights but economic rights—particularly those enumerated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These include the right to protection against unemployment, equal pay for equal work and remuneration that ensures an existence worthy of human dignity; the right to rest and leisure; and the right to an adequate standard of living, "including food, clothing, housing and medical care and social services."

Says Mittal, "In these times when everyone is talking about an economic boom, the bus tour has made it very obvious to all the participants, including the congressional



By Joel Bleifuss

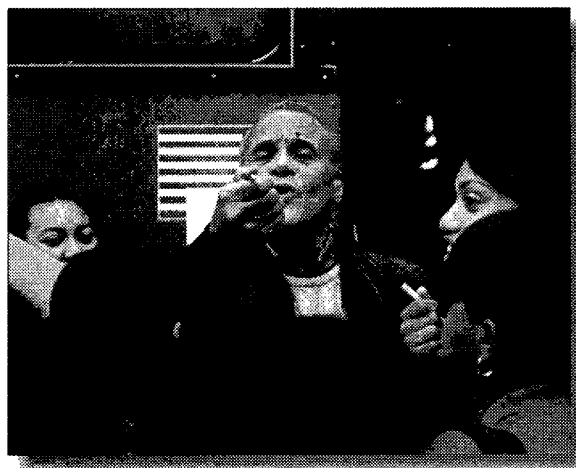
representatives, that we need to ask, 'Economic boom for whom?'"

The Progressive Caucus used the occasion of the tour to release detailed position papers on health care and income inequality. This marked the first time that the caucus has taken a stand as a group. Positions on education, Social Security, taxation, the budget and foreign policy are in the works. The caucus plans to turn its position papers into a progressive agenda that will be

released in conjunction with the president's January State of the Union message.

At the Antioch Baptist Church food pantry in Atlanta, a tower of Air Crisps, bound in plastic wrap, is slowly disassembled as church volunteers—all black—pack food boxes. In an adjoining room, about 100 people—all black and poor—wait on rows of folding metal chairs. Names are called, people walk up to the window that connects the pantry with the waiting room, they turn in their number, are handed their weekly food box and then leave through the back door. Voices are hushed. No one is happy to be there. "The stuff I get here I don't have money to pay for no way," says an elderly woman, who explains, shamefaced, that her small Social Security check does not provide enough to live on.

According to the USDA, the number of Americans defined as "food insecure," those who go hungry at some point in the year, jumped 20 percent in the past two years, increasing to 36



million. After hearing testimony from former food pantry clients at a luncheon in the Antioch Baptist dining room, Conyers told the assembled church volunteers and social workers, "We have to get more congressmen hitting the road and finding out what is happening to everybody." That line

received the biggest applause of the day. Apparently, most people believe most members of Congress are clueless.

The caucus task force on income inequality, chaired by Lee and McKinney, wants to bridge both that chasm and the one that separates the haves from the have-nots. To that end, the task force has set out a "Campaign to Close America's Economic Divide." The plan calls for introducing a package of legislative initiatives to address disparities in both income and wealth, and then forming a "national leadership steering committee" to put the issue and the proposed legislation before the public through a coordinated media campaign, educational forums and local actions. Legislation currently pending in Congress that the caucus could endorse includes Lee's A Living Wage, Jobs for All bill, which would promote a framework for full employment and economic human rights, and Rep. Bernie Sanders' (I-Vt.) Livable Wage Act, which would increase the minimum wage to \$6.50 and index it to the cost of living.

A similar call for human rights was delivered at the next bus stop, Grady Memorial Hospital, the Atlanta region's only public hospital. The tour heard testimony from representatives of the Grady Coalition, a group of hospital patients and health care providers who had successfully fought off a move to hike the hospital's rates. According to the hospital's own estimates, the rate hike would have resulted in an increase of 6,500 deaths or cases of severe illness among the indigent population that depends on the hospital for health care. Lee believes the profit-driven health care industry should be abolished. "A single-payer, national health care system makes more sense," she says. Lee says she plans to introduce a bill that would establish a national health service in the next Congress.

But such legislation will only pass if Congress gets an infusion of new blood. Conyers prescribes a public mobilization to elect progressives to Congress. "Every state in the union has to have representatives who will vote with the Progressive Caucus," he says. "We have to learn to organize like we did in the civil rights movement." For her part, Lee urges progressives not to abandon party politics. "There is dis-

A growing grassroots movement is reshaping the political environment and putting human rights on the agenda.

connect between grassroots organizations and party organization," she says. "It is necessary for progressives and for members of grassroots organizations to get involved in local Democratic Party organizations and take over the party."

Not everyone on the bus tour was with that program. Like many on the left, Cheri Honkala, leader of the Philadelphia Kensington Welfare Rights Union (KWRU), has little use for Congress. She seeks to mobilize an army of the poor. "We cannot legislate our freedom, we must free ourselves," she told the audience at the Georgia Hunger Coalition. In October, the KWRU organized a march from Washington to the United Nations calling for an end to poverty, an event that got little notice in the mainstream media. "I don't care if they don't see us on the TV," she says, "millions will be marching in the streets."



PHOTOS: JOEL BLEIFUSS

ABOVE: Volunteers at the Antioch Baptist Church food pantry pack boxes for some of the 250 families served each week.

OPPOSITE LEFT: Harry Belafonte is mobbed by autograph seekers at a high school in Decatur, Georgia.

But the bus tour demonstrated that what really gets people on their feet these days are celebrities. In its coverage of the tour, CNN sought out actor Danny Glover and Belafonte, ignoring the members of Congress. At an all-black high school in Decatur, a couple thousand of students cheered as Glover took the stage. He spoke of the need to listen to the stories of people who are affected by the downside of the current economic boom. "The 21st century has to be about our stories," he said. "The stories that allow us to redistribute wealth in this country." The students cheered some more.

Don't discount the power of a famous face. "I use my celebrity to convince those who don't think the issue is big enough," Belafonte says. "They need a hook, and I'll be the bait."

Belafonte has been down this road before. And he and Glover will be on board next year for the second leg of the Progressive Caucus Economic Human Rights Bus Tour. (Alabama, the Mississippi Delta and New England are potential destinations.)

"It's almost like *deja vu*," Belafonte says. "I came here 35 years ago on this kind of mission. I would have thought that by now we wouldn't have to be doing this kind of work. It is discouraging that we have to come back again. But given that we have to, it is encouraging that there is an audience that is up to the task." ■

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*from Erik Erikson's *Young Man Luther*



The Popular Revolutionary Army trains in Guerrero.

PHILIPPE DIEDERICH/NEWSMAKERS

soldiers—manages to stay on top. Besides claiming the governorship in February's election, the PRI won the majority of municipal and state legislative races in October.

Others have long given up on the system. Not far from Acapulco, the footpaths of rebels wind through the jungle thickets and pine forests that slope down from the peaks of the

Sierra Madres. In the early '70s, guerrillas rose up calling for a socialist government. An army counterinsurgency campaign followed, leaving razed hamlets, disappeared villagers and a bitter residue of hatred toward the government.

On June 28, 1996, rumors of a guerrilla resurgence in Guerrero were affirmed when the Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR) emerged at Aguas Blancas, where 1,000 people had gathered to commemorate the massacre of 17 unarmed farmers by the Guerrero state police a year earlier. In 1998, a large faction crit-

ical of the EPR's dogmatism and bureaucracy split off to form the Revolutionary Army of the Insurgent People (ERPI). The geographic scope of the guerrilla movement is now wider than it was in the '70s—both groups have moved into other Mexican states. Meanwhile, PRI government officials accuse PRD politicians of supporting the guerrillas.

Many fear that the dirty war of the '70s is being revived. Since 1996, periodic guerrilla strikes and army maneuvers have unsettled the state. Human rights groups maintain that soldiers have murdered, raped, stolen property from and unlawfully detained individuals accused of cohorting with guerrillas. "We're worse than Chiapas," says Guerrero state PRD leader Carlos Payan.

ERPI leaders recently told the Mexican weekly magazine *Proceso* that they were preparing for uprisings in wake of next year's presidential elections. The government may use this as a pretext to stamp out all popular protest surrounding the elections. If PRI presidential candidate Francisco Labastida wins and voter fraud is suspected, violence could ensue. ■

activist, Torreblanca overcame the entrenched political machinery of the long-ruling Party of the Institutional Revolution (PRI) to win office on Oct. 3 as the candidate of a four-party coalition, including the PRD. Torreblanca's pledges to clean up the corruption and governmental inefficiency that have left Acapulco in a state of near ruin struck a chord with voters.

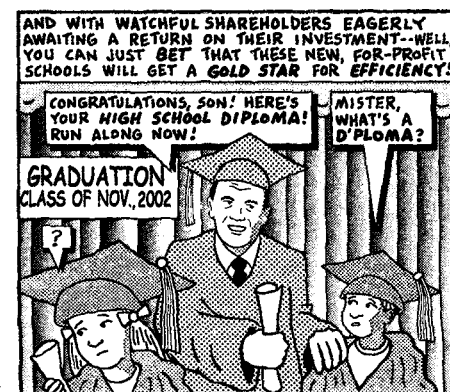
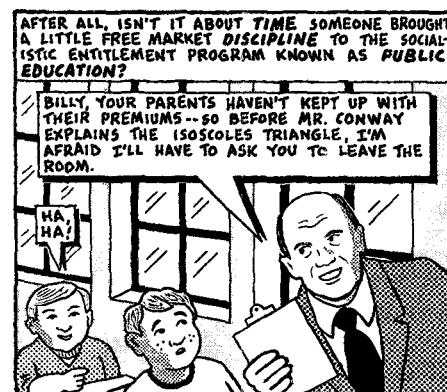
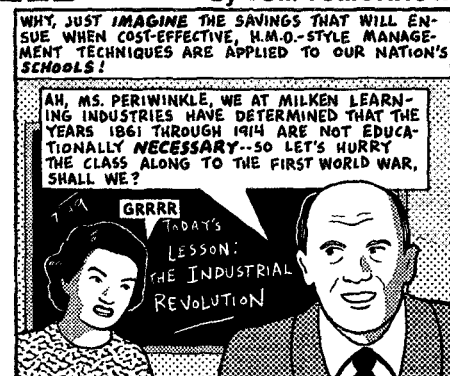
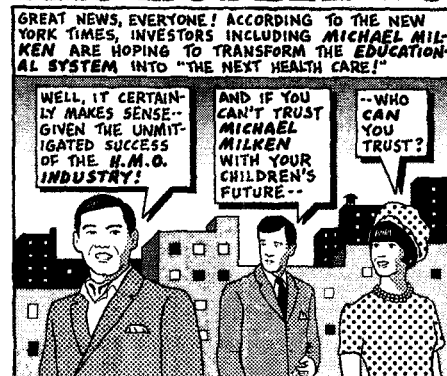
But within hours of Torreblanca's victory, a young PRD activist, Marco Antonio Lopez, was shot. He was the 206th PRD member to be murdered under mysterious circumstances in Guerrero since the party was founded in 1989. During the next few weeks, the offices and homes of other PRD members were ransacked, anonymous threats were made, and several party members and their relatives were kidnapped. PRD leader Amalia Garcia claimed that the PRI was sending a message in anticipation of next year's presidential election: Voting for change is risky business.

Ruled by local strongmen who control the state's economy and politics, harsh social and economic conditions underlie Guerrero's political landscape. One quarter of the state's estimated population of 3 million is illiterate and the unemployment rate is more than 40 percent. But the worst off are the half-million indigenous citizens, who scratch out an existence in the rough folds of the countryside, or migrate to work as laborers on the NAFTA export farms of northern Mexico. Others hustle a living peddling handicrafts and candy in the streets.

During the past decade, social movements of all stripes have turned to the PRD as an instrument of change, but the PRI—through vote-buying, patronage and its extensive network of foot

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



IN PERSON

Tom Ammiano

Gay, left-wing and serious about victory in San Francisco

By Christian Parenti

SAN FRANCISCO—Alarms are sounding and distress lights flashing on the control panels of the political machine in San Francisco. The money-powered behemoth, currently piloted by Mayor Willie Brown and navigated by state Rep. John Burton, has hit the shoals of a grassroots insurgency and is taking on water fast.

The crisis began when Tom Ammiano—the openly gay and solidly left-wing president of the city Board of Supervisors—filed papers to be a write-in candidate for mayor just three weeks before the November election. With a war chest of only \$18,000 and the handicap of a smirking and dismissive mainstream press, the Ammiano write-in campaign blasted two multimillion-dollar contenders out of the water to finish second, just behind Brown. Ammiano's first-round victory was all the more stunning because Brown had secured an early endorsement from one of Ammiano's bedrock constituencies: organized labor. Despite labor's official backing of Brown, the Ammiano coalition includes rank-and-file union activists along with tenants and neighborhood groups, gays and lesbians, and human rights advocates.

Now Brown, who took 38 percent of the vote, and Ammiano, who carried 25 percent, are campaigning hard for a Dec. 14 runoff. In lieu of big money, the Ammiano team hit the streets and registered 9,000 new voters in three weeks.

To fully appreciate this David-and-Goliath struggle, one must understand Ammiano and the radical gay tradition to which he is heir. Raised by a close-knit, Italian-American family in a working-class suburb of Newark, New Jersey, Ammiano came to the Bay Area to teach in 1963. During the Vietnam War, he worked with a Quaker school in

South Vietnam where his adventures included weathering the Tet Offensive. After returning to San Francisco, Ammiano got more heavily involved in grassroots politics; by 1975, he had helped build a gay teachers' organization and was pressuring the School Board to include sexual orientation in its nondiscrimination policy.

"I can't remember first meeting Tom. He has been active in politics as long as I can remember," says Harry Britt, who became San Francisco's second gay supervisor, after Harvey Milk, the first gay supervisor, was assassinated in 1978.



San Francisco's next mayor?

"Tom was always fighting homophobic stereotypes. At a time when gay men where vilified as promiscuous, selfish and decadent, Tom was just the opposite. His politics were kind—about simple and direct forms of helping people in need."

Ammiano's first foray into electoral politics was a quixotic \$12 bid for a seat on the School Board in 1980. After one more losing bid, Ammiano won a position in 1990. In 1994, Ammiano was elected to the Board of Supervisors, and then re-elected as the

board president in 1998. All the while, he has stayed true to form, pursuing a radical agenda that has included a proposed increase in the hotel tax, a new fee on financial traders, a 2 percent tax on anyone in San Francisco earning more than \$150,000 and a boost in the business tax for big companies along with a cut for small ones. "Downtown"—big business and its phalanx of lobbyists, consultants and politicians—killed most of that plan. But the hotel tax became law and added millions to city coffers.

Ammiano's populist agenda has had other victories as well. In 1996, he proposed and championed a "domestic partners" law that forced the 8,000 companies doing business with the city government to provide medical benefits for the unmarried partners of their employees, gay or straight.

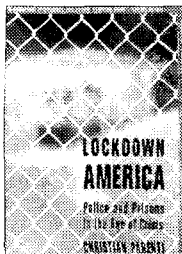
Despite a united assault from the Catholic Church, nonprofits like the Salvation Army and many of the city's biggest corporate clients, Ammiano's domestic partners legislation became law. Last year, United Airlines, the last holdout, surrendered and offered domestic partners benefits to its employees in San Francisco and around the world.

Throughout it all, Ammiano has faced an endless barrage of homophobic attacks. It began back in Newark. "I was harassed because people thought I was effeminate, so when it was bad, I had to walk different routes back home," Ammiano said in a recent interview.

Vignettes like that carry particular weight in San Francisco. Twenty-one years ago, Milk, another openly gay, wise-cracking, left-wing politician, was gunned down, along with the liberal Mayor George Moscone, by a hate- and twinkie-filled former cop named Dan White.

More recently, an anonymous homophobe posted a detailed account of Ammiano's daily moves on the Internet: his address, where and when he catches the bus, where he eats, etc. This is on top of a steady stream of anti-gay death threats. But Ammiano, who, along with everything else, is an accomplished stand-up comic, laughs it off. "Some people have call waiting," he says. "I have call hating." ■

Wrap.



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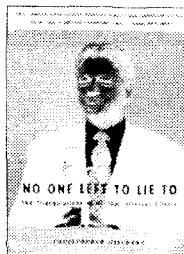
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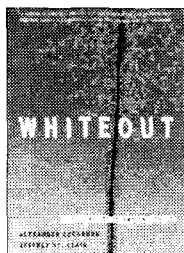
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End Imperial Impunity

In Rome on July 17, 1998, 120 nations voted to create a permanent International Criminal Court (ICC) to try war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. Only seven nations opposed the measure, including Iraq, China, Israel and the United States.

The ICC will be created when 60 nations ratify the Rome Statute, which is expected to occur by 2002. The ICC will be headquartered in The Hague, with 18 judges and its chief and deputy prosecutors elected by a majority of nations that have ratified the statute. Only nations that have signed and ratified may contribute judges and prosecutors. Eighty-nine nations have now signed the Rome Statute, including all of America's NATO allies. Four have ratified. The United States still refuses to sign.

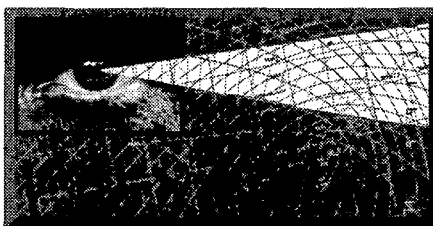
This year, representatives of more than 100 nations have met twice at the United Nations to settle the rules of procedure and evidence. Another preparatory session will be held from Nov. 29 to Dec. 17.

The United States now acknowledges that the ICC will come into being with or without its signature. And it recognizes that the Rome Statute cannot be changed. Nevertheless, the United States used the August preparatory meetings to lobby for binding agreements that would alter the statute without formally amending it. The most dangerous of the U.S. demands is immunity for official acts of government officials. The so-called "like-minded states," which were in the majority, rejected this position as an obstacle to the ICC's effectiveness. But it is outrageous that the United States is advocating it at all.

The United States is concerned that the president or secretary of defense, or U.S. troops acting on their orders, could be charged with war crimes for future acts like the bombing of Cambodia, the mining of Nicaragua's harbors or the bombing of the Sudanese factory. The United States wants a binding agreement that official government acts will be immune from prosecution. In other words, the coun-

try accused of crimes would be the judge of whether the acts were official.

Such immunity for government officials would be a giant step backward for international law. Saddam Hussein could claim that his genocidal chemical warfare against the Kurds was an official act



to protect national security. Even the Nazis could have claimed that their crimes were official acts.

Granting immunity to official acts would blast away the bedrock of international humanitarian law, the Nuremberg Principles, which hold that no person, whatever his rank, is immune from prosecution for crimes against humanity. The U.S. position would violate the Genocide Convention of 1948, the Geneva Conventions of 1949, and the Torture Convention, all international treaties that the United States has ratified. The U.S. position would destroy the purpose of the ICC, which is to render justice when national courts cannot or will not punish leaders who commit genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

At a recent American Bar Association meeting, I pointed out the short-sightedness of the U.S. position to a State Department lawyer. He replied: "The president couldn't do his job very well from a jail in The Hague."

But multiple safeguards built into the Rome Statute would prevent indictments of American officials. The statute gives national courts priority. If allegations are made against a U.S. official, the ICC first must refer them to the U.S. government, and if the United States conducts a good faith investigation and finds them groundless, the ICC

would lack any jurisdiction. Further, war crimes must be intentional, providing a defense against prosecution for accidental bombings. Finally, a majority of the U.N. Security Council, where the United States wields great influence, can take jurisdiction over a case away from the ICC.

The United States doesn't need "official acts" of immunity to protect its servicemen or leaders from ICC prosecution. The situation is different for dictatorships. National courts have failed to punish leaders who commit massive crimes against their own people because those courts are controlled by the very same dictators who commit the crimes. Only an international court can bring tyrants such as Idi Amin and Pol Pot to justice. Does the United States want to create immunity from prosecution for the "official acts" of such dictators?

Further, ad hoc tribunals like those for Yugoslavia and Rwanda are no deterrent to future killers. They are slow, costly to establish and will create inconsistent international criminal law.

It is time for the United States to reassert its international leadership in the

The United States should support justice for all—not justice for all except the United States.

enforcement of human rights by rejoining its allies and signing the Rome Statute. The United States should support justice for all; not justice for all except government officials; not justice for all except the United States. The era of impunity for war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity is over. ■

Gregory Stanton, a former professor of international law and State Department official, drafted the U.N. resolutions that created the Rwanda Tribunal. He is the director of the World Federalist Association's Campaign to End Genocide and the coordinator of the Coalition for an International Criminal Court (www.iccnw.org).

Action Jackson Takes On Decatur

When members of the Decatur chapter of the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition asked the Rev. Jesse Jackson to help them deal with a controversy at a local high school, it seemed like just another of the many brushfires he is summoned to help extinguish.

After all, it appeared to be an easy enough issue: Seven African-American students at a local high school were expelled for two years for brawling at a football game last September. One student subsequently dropped out; since there were no provisions for alternative education, it was highly unlikely the expelled students would return to complete their secondary education. In effect, they were permanently kicked out of school for a fistfight.

Local leaders thought the punishment was wildly disproportionate, but for nearly two months their protests fell on deaf ears at the Decatur School Board. The city's black leaders were sure the board would quickly rescind the draconian punishment it had imposed once they were caught in the glare of the public spotlight that followed Jackson.

Indeed, the initial stages of Jackson's efforts seemed to bear fruit. Illinois Gov. George Ryan, just back from a controversial trip to Cuba, traveled to Decatur on Nov. 8 and helped broker an agreement that reduced the expulsions from two years to one year and allowed the teens to attend a school for troubled youth. But Jackson rejected those penalties as excessive, and his intervention has turned the issue into a national controversy.

Jackson is being roundly condemned for misapplying tactics from his civil rights past to the complex issue of post-Columbine school violence. And since the media have portrayed the Decatur protest as Jackson's crusade, the stand-off has acquired dimensions of pride and stature. The School Board cannot appear to cave in, and the combative reverend also has dug in his heels. The issue has moved into the courts and has yet to be resolved.

Jackson clearly denounced the fight that prompted the punishments, but he condemned the School Board for committing the greater crime. Sentencing the students to days of unproductive time and futures without education would increase their chances of joining



record numbers of their peers in a criminal justice system with a ravenous appetite for black youth. "The board's action was an educational death sentence for these students," Jackson said. "If there's hell in them, then let's educate the hell out of them. We must not see the jail system as the back-up of our school system."

The harsh penalties were meted out as part of Decatur's "zero tolerance" policy. This kind of policy—mandatory minimum punishment uniformly enforced—has caught on like wildfire in the wake of a series of recent school shootings. Jackson's mediation brought attention to the crude uniformity and disparate racial effects of these policies. "This isn't about black and white," Jackson has insisted. "It's about wrong and right."

There are clear racial effects in the school district's patterns of punishment. Of 1,700 students suspended last year, 1,038 were African-American in a district that is about 40 percent black. Of six students expelled last year, five were black.

Illinois School Superintendent Glenn McGee also visited Decatur, and although he proposed solutions that were in direct accord with Jackson's, few media accounts note their agreement. Both said that the six students

should not face identical punishments, since they all had varying degrees of involvement in the brawl, and that they should be allowed back into their regular high schools if they maintain at least a C average and good attendance in the alternative program.

The day after the School Board rejected this option, the Macon County state's attorney filed criminal charges against the students. These charges came nearly two months after the brawl and were clearly intended to intimidate the youths' supporters. Jackson mobilized a Nov. 14 march that attracted at least 5,000 demonstrators; on Nov. 16, he was arrested for attempting to enter school property and charged with felony mob action and two misdemeanors.

He has been excoriated in the local and national media for interfering in local concerns and for acting out of a sense of racial allegiance. In one typical mainstream editorial, the *Chicago Sun-Times* fumed that Jackson's demonstration had "none of the honor of the civil rights movement and all of the shame of a fight."

But, as usual, Jackson is on to something. These school policies are akin to absolutist policies like New York's "broken windows" style of law

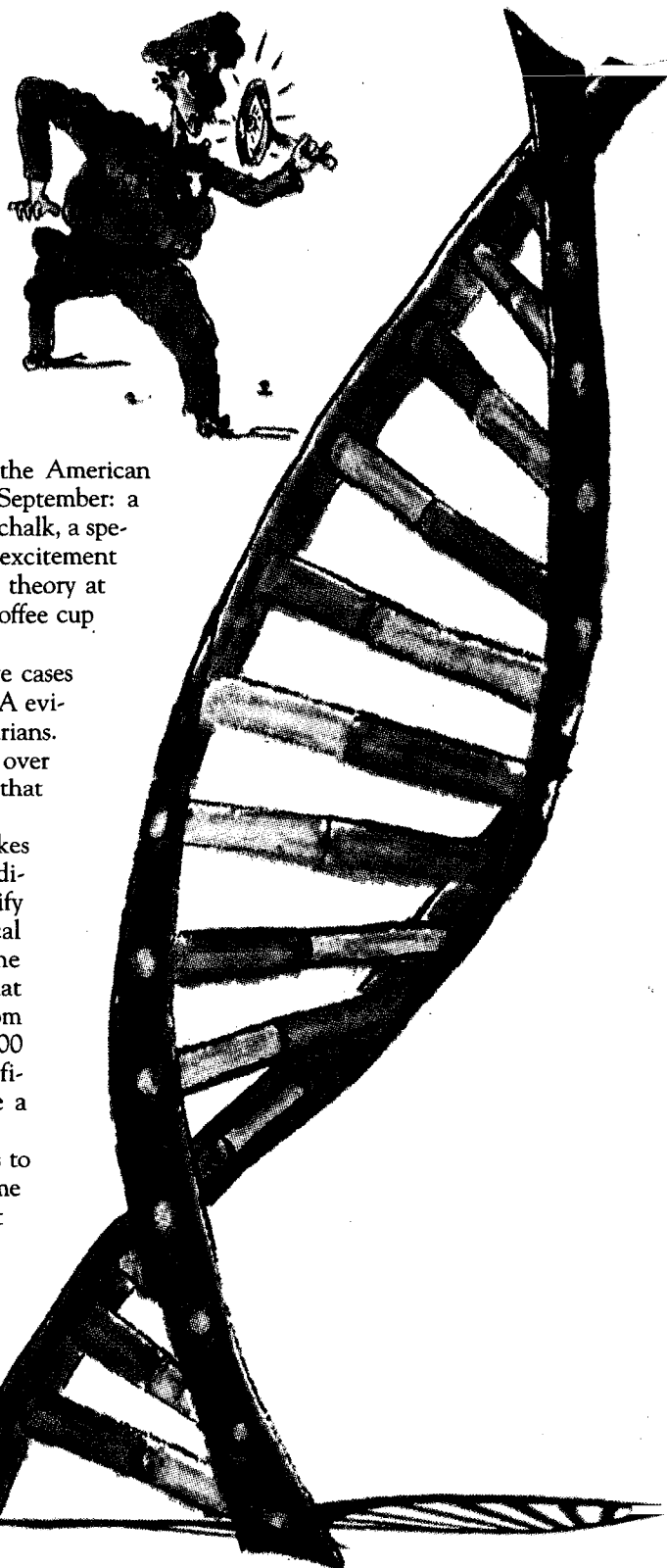
Expelling the students will only make them more likely to join record numbers of their peers in prison.

enforcement, where no offense is too petty to be prosecuted. These policies implement punishment that explicitly excludes mercy. There are no opportunities for judicial discretion or mitigation.

Born of cultural anxiety about youth crime, the concept rationalizes a dynamic that tracks undereducated black youth into a criminal justice system where many are tried as adults and subjected to mandatory minimum sentences. This web of biased presumptions severely limits the horizons of black youth. Jackson is right to be on the case. ■

GENE COPS

THE POLICE WANT YOUR DNA



BY PAUL DERIENZO AND JOAN MOOSSY

LAS VEGAS

There was an interesting array of shiny gadgets on display at the American Society of Crime Lab Directors' annual conference here in September: a microscope for comparing bullets, glow-in-the-dark crime scene chalk, a special light that illuminates nearly invisible footprints. But the real excitement concerned the latest DNA fingerprinting technology. The ability, in theory at least, to identify someone from a sample as small as the saliva on a coffee cup has politicians and law enforcement officials drooling.

DNA technology is heralded by law enforcement as a way to solve cases thought to be unsolvable. At the same time, the increasing use of DNA evidence is raising important legal and ethical questions from civil libertarians. Will the expansion of DNA testing by law enforcement cast a shadow over our basic constitutional freedoms? Or is DNA the vehicle for ensuring that only the guilty are punished?

DNA, or deoxyribonucleic acid, is the basic building block that makes up the genetic material determining each person's heredity and individual identity. DNA can be used like a fingerprint to identify individuals because each person's DNA is unique (except for identical twins and bone marrow transplant recipients). The FBI and each of the 50 states are building an interlinked computerized database that already has a backlog of 1 million blood and tissue samples taken from crime scenes and convicted offenders. The FBI says that nearly 600 cases have been solved using its DNA database, including the identification of a serial rapist in Washington who also turned out to be a serial rapist in Florida.

Claiming that DNA fingerprinting allows them to link crime scenes to suspects throughout the United States, police officials say they see a time when no criminal suspect will be unidentified. Attorney General Janet Reno is calling for the DNA fingerprinting of everyone arrested in the United States, potentially as many as 15 million people a year. "We should be collecting it from everybody," agrees New York City Police Commissioner Howard Safir. "The only ones who have anything to worry about from DNA testing are criminals."

The model for the police in the United States is Great Britain, where the use of DNA-based identification has gone much further. British police already have an extensive DNA database that has been functioning since 1995, with the stated goal of including the

entire population. The police in Britain have asked, and even required, thousands of citizens in certain buildings or towns to give samples in high-profile cases.

Politicians wanting to look tough on crime have been taking the lead in promoting the use of DNA evidence. New York has established one of the nation's most ambitious DNA identification programs. Starting in December, half the defendants convicted in the state each year—about 25,000 individuals, on average—will have to provide a DNA sample. New York is also one of the few states to require DNA samples from everyone already in prison, on parole or on probation for certain crimes, about 100,000 people. But Safir isn't satisfied. Although the plan "is a good start," he says, "it doesn't go far enough."

Until recently, New York, like most states, limited DNA collection to people convicted of sex crimes and a few other violent offenses. New York now joins eight states (the others are

Alabama, Maine, Massachusetts, New Mexico, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia and Wyoming) that track a wider range of felons. The crimes that will

be listed in the databanks now include drug dealing, robbery, burglary, grand larceny, arson, kidnapping, attempted burglary and the most serious categories of drug possession, as well as murder, manslaughter, assault and sex crimes. In July, the

New Mexico state legislature went even further, voting to require DNA samples from all convicted felons, including for those found guilty of nonviolent offenses like passing bad checks.

Milwaukee Assistant District Attorney Norm Gahn, a tireless advocate of DNA fingerprinting, has pushed the envelope by filing rape and kidnapping charges

against a suspect known only as "John Doe, unknown male with matching deoxyribonucleic acid profile." Gahn wanted to beat the statute of limitations, which was set to run out on the six-year-old crime. "We know that one person raped these three women," he says. "We will catch him."

But criminals are evidently on the cutting edge of the new technology, too. There are stories of deliberate contamination of the crime scene and convicts exchanging saliva to contaminate samples. Gahn tells the story of an incarcerated rapist who sent a semen sample to a friend and convinced her to apply it to her body and to report a rape in an effort to discredit his own DNA identification.

In 1998, the Justice Department created the National Commission on the Future of DNA Evidence to "encourage the most effective use of DNA evidence." At the commission's September meeting in Washington, Wisconsin Supreme Court Chief Justice Shirley S. Abrahamson, chairwoman of the commission, called for recommendations on how to best promote and integrate DNA fingerprinting into the fabric of daily life in the United States. Congress already is considering legislation to expand DNA fingerprinting at the national level. A Senate bill sponsored by Utah Republican Orrin Hatch would mandate that all individuals convicted of "crimes of violence" or violent acts of "juvenile delinquency" have their DNA profile entered into the FBI databank. The bill is expected to reach President Clinton's desk by the end of the year.

Not everyone is so excited about the promise of DNA. The American Civil Liberties Union objects to any expansion in the list of crimes being entered into DNA databases. "It is a mistake to equate DNA samples with fingerprints," says Norman Siegel, executive director of the New York Civil Liberties Union. "Fingerprints are representations of the physical attributes of the tips of our fingers; they are used only for identification purposes. DNA is that plus much more."

GENETIC DISCRIMINATION

The use of DNA testing by insurance companies and employers may be the next civil rights battleground. The nonprofit advocacy group Council for Responsible Genetics has documented hundreds of cases in which healthy people were denied insurance or a job based on genetic predictions. According to the American Management Association, hundreds of companies already use genetic testing for employment purposes. As the cost of DNA testing goes down, the numbers of businesses testing their employees is expected to skyrocket. "Discrimination will be rampant," says ACLU spokesman Lewis Maltby.

The AMA reports that more than 100 companies test for susceptibility to workplace toxins. Dozens of those companies don't inform their employees about why they're being tested. Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory is being sued by workers who claim their civil rights were violated

when 5,000 employees were secretly tested for the sickle-cell gene, syphilis and even pregnancy.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission considers discrimination because of genetic traits to be illegal under federal disability law, but the courts have yet to rule on that stance. At least 31 states have enacted laws against genetic discrimination. But the legislation varies with some banning testing for a genetic trait and others banning any employee testing. The only federal law on the subject is the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, which limits the rights of group health insurers to deny coverage for pre-existing and genetic conditions. Self-employed workers and the unemployed aren't covered by the act.

Martha Volner, policy director for the Alliance of Genetic Support Groups, says, "Genetic discrimination is the civil rights issue of the 21st century."

DNA not only provides information about identity, but also about 4,000 different diseases and genetic conditions. According to ACLU Executive Director Ira Glasser, more is at stake than personal privacy. "The history of information in this country is that once the government has it, it is usually misused," he says. "Census information that took down ethnic background was supposed to be used just for counting, then it ended up being used to round up Japanese-Americans during World War II."

The possibility for racial profiling is one of the issues that some officials worry could turn the public against DNA fingerprinting. Critics fear that despite laws limiting the uses of DNA databanks, there may be pressure from some researchers to use the data for studies of genetic susceptibility to violent or criminal behavior. Frankfort, Illinois Police Chief Darrell Sanders puts it bluntly: "The potential for what you can find out about people is what scares the hell out of everybody."

Others fear that law enforcement could gain access to DNA samples through existing banks of tissue held by medical institutions. The Centers for Disease Control has been collecting tissue samples since 1962, and paternity tests use DNA for identification in custody and child support cases. New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani has proposed that DNA samples be taken from every newborn in the city to aid in identification. "I think we'll reach universal DNA databanking for criminal purposes through the backdoor of public health," predicts Dr. Phillip Reilly, president of the Shriver Center for Mental Retardation at Harvard University.

In 1999, drops of blood will have been routinely collected and saved from almost every newborn. The blood is analyzed for genetic diseases such as cystic fibrosis, muscular dystrophy and sickle-cell anemia. But the samples can be kept for just a few weeks or up to 25 years. "There simply are no laws right now in most cases

which control who can collect biometric information from us," says ACLU Associate Director Barry Steinhardt, "whether they can transfer it to a third party, what they can do with it, whether they can take it without our consent. All those things are open now."

Of course, not all uses of DNA favor prosecutors and police. Barry Scheck, perhaps best known as a member of O.J. Simpson's defense team, runs the Innocence Project at Cardozo Law School in New York, which has been using DNA evidence to free wrongly convicted prisoners. Nationwide, at least 48 former prisoners, including 12 who were on Death Row, have been exonerated by DNA. Scheck says that this is just "the tip of the iceberg."

Surprisingly, the Justice Department agrees. Based on the record of DNA testing in freeing wrongfully convicted prisoners, the National Commission on the Future of DNA Evidence has recommended that the criminal appeals process be changed, permitting prisoners to use DNA evidence to file an appeal even after the deadline has passed. Scheck calls the proposal a "home run" for civil liberties. Two states, New York and Illinois, already allow late appeals based on DNA evidence. Both pay for the tests if the convict is indigent and

there's a reasonable basis to believe the test may prove innocence. There are no court decisions mandating that the state pay for DNA testing, however.

Fears that the floodgates of prisoners contesting their convictions would be opened have led some judges and prosecutors to reject post-conviction DNA testing, which may become a significant legal issue in future cases. Requests by prisoners for DNA tests are already growing. But as the use of DNA fingerprinting becomes universal, say its proponents, the need for post-conviction testing will diminish anyway.



**"THE POTENTIAL
FOR WHAT YOU CAN FIND OUT
ABOUT PEOPLE IS WHAT
SCARES THE HELL OUT OF
EVERYBODY."**

Despite the claims that DNA testing will be a panacea for law enforcement, DNA-based identification is no more effective than the investigators, scientists and labs that handle the samples. In one test, the California Association of Crime Laboratories found that DNA labs like Cellmark and Cetus mistakenly matched test samples that weren't identical. There also have been questions about government DNA labs. The FBI's Crime Lab was the subject of embarrassing revelations by a whistleblower who charged that the lab had been faking

results, or "drylabbing."

U.S. Attorney Barry Rand Elden headed an 18-month investigation of the FBI Crime Lab. In 1997, Elden released a scathing report that accused the lab of botched and possibly doctored tests in work on both the Oklahoma City and World Trade Center bombing cases. Elden's report stopped short of saying the lab was framing suspects, but said employees were cutting corners on proper procedures in ways that tended to favor the prosecution. DNA identification often requires a subjective interpretation and determining a match between various samples can be ambiguous, opening up the possibility for bias. The FBI responded to the criticisms by transferring some employees to new jobs and breaking ground this year on new lab facilities in Quantico, Virginia.

Much of the policy discussion at the September meeting centered around the looming issue of how long law enforcement should retain DNA profiles in their databanks. Chicago Police Superintendent Terry G. Hillard blasted FBI proposals that law enforcement agencies hold DNA information indefinitely. Hillard told commissioners that "being a law enforcement officer for 31 years, I really just don't trust the system that much." Harvard's Phillip Reilly adds: "We run the risk of tripping up on ourselves and failing our charge if we don't adequately address the issue of trust and say we believe in law enforcement's ability to be the custodian of these samples for a long period of time and to treat them with the highest integrity."

California's DNA databank has archived bloodstains and DNA samples from more than 100,000 people convicted of violent and sexual offenses. The head of the state's Bureau of Forensic Services, Jan Bashinski, defends her state's privacy guarantees. She says that California law requires the databank to "remove any evidence samples we test once the case has been solved and it has been determined that the sample did-

n't have anything to do with the case." Bashinski adds that "if we have a piece of evidence that turns out to be irrelevant, that profile cannot go into the databank."

Advances in technology may soon make much of today's debate over DNA obsolete. The San Diego-based company Nanogen says that within five years credit-card-sized devices with computer chips will be able to analyze DNA samples at a crime scene. With such technology, police officers would be called on to make decisions now made in labs by trained scientists. "Most of this sounds like gee-whiz scientific stuff right now, but my conviction, and a very strong one, is that we've always been surprised with new developments," says James Crow, a professor of genetics at the University of Wisconsin. "We say that it's going to happen tomorrow, and it turns out to happen today." ■

Paul DeRienzo and Joan Moossy are co-hosts of Let 'em Talk, a weekly radio show on WBAI-FM in New York. Research for this article was supported by a grant from the Stewart Mott Charitable Trust.

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OUT OF THE ASHES

U.S. ACTION TAKES OFF

BY DAVID MOBERG

CHICAGO

Marti Rosenberg was skeptical when she heard about plans for a new national progressive organization. As executive director of Ocean State Action, a coalition in Rhode Island, she doubted that her group would benefit much from joining. She had no previous working relationship with the organizers, who had been part of Citizen Action, a once-influential national federation of statewide, multi-issue citizen groups. Founded in 1979 and once claiming to represent millions of people through its door-to-door canvassing, Citizen Action collapsed two years ago after it was tainted by the campaign fundraising scandal that brought down Teamsters President Ron Carey.

In September 1998, at a meeting of 100 citizen movement leaders, the new group's organizers explained that they needed groups like Ocean State to grow beyond the limits of the old Citizen Action and to learn from its mistakes. Rosenberg was impressed when the organizers trusted these leaders to develop the mission statement for the proposed organization. She liked their commitment to racial diversity. And as director of a statewide group, she was reassured that the new national organization would not pressure her to take on issues that her members in Rhode Island didn't want to pursue. The slow, deliberative process of creating the new group won her over. "All right," she decided at the end of the meeting, "I'm in."

After a year and a half of systematic organizing, 39 statewide groups decided they also wanted to be in the new organization—U.S. Action. Sixteen of them came from the old Citizen Action network, and the organization reflects all parts of the country (though crucial California still has no representative). The national member organizations of U.S. Action, which held its founding convention in suburban Chicago in mid-November, also include the Service Employees Union (SEIU), AFSCME (public

employees) and the United States Student Association, as well as a half dozen support groups, including the Midwest Academy (a training center) and Progressive Action Network (door-to-door canvassers). Although the numbers aren't firm, the state groups represent more than 700,000 members (mainly people who contribute some money), more than 100 full-time staff and annual combined budgets of \$15 to \$20 million.

The individual state groups—probably strongest in Wisconsin, New Jersey, Illinois and New York—have tackled a wide variety of issues, including "clean money" campaign finance reform, utility rate reductions, an HMO patient bill of rights, living wage ordinances and protection against lead poisoning.

They have fought corporate farming, school vouchers and cuts in Social Security and Medicare. Although individual states will continue to pursue their own programs, the national organization will coordinate two major campaigns: one for universal health care on the single-payer model and a second advocating high-quality public education for every child (including opposing vouchers for private schools). U.S. Action will also take part in electoral politics, ranging from campaign finance reform to supporting progressive candidates.

The decision to launch a national campaign for good public education reflects a contrast with Citizen Action, which favored populist, anti-corporate politics and issues with a strong national focus. But in its efforts

to attract more black and Latino community organizations, U.S. Action recruited minority group leaders and asked what issues were important to them. Fighting for good public schools was at the top of the list. U.S. Action executive director Jeff Blum says the group has taken great pains to give voice to groups that are often left out, especially people of color. "The issue of race is so pernicious, so divisive, that we're not at a place where we can't make eradicating racism front and cen-



ILLUSTRATION BY STEVE ANDERSON

can," argues Rosenberg, who was elected U.S. Action treasurer. "It's too deep to say we can't deal with it or should ignore it."

Among the top six elected leaders, there isn't a single white male, and there are "representative population councils" for African-Americans, Latinos, Asians, Native Americans, gays and lesbians, women, the disabled, youth and senior citizens. This might sound like a case of identity politics run amok. However, these councils are envisioned not as fragmenting caucuses but rather as ways to recruit different constituencies into a common program. William McNary, an African-American organizer who also will be co-chairman of Citizen Action of Illinois, says U.S. Action will "fight the fights that have to be fought so we don't spend time fighting each other."

For nearly two decades, the old Citizen Action fought for national health insurance, natural gas price controls, protection of Medicaid and other causes. It provided ground troops and a citizen group vehicle for many Democratic campaigns, and it nurtured members to be candidates, including two members of Congress who addressed the U.S. Action founding conference, Illinois Rep. Jan Schakowsky and Wisconsin Rep. Tammy Baldwin. Initially, Citizen Action raised money from canvassing and contributions from unions, trial lawyers and other groups. But as canvassing became less and less lucrative, Citizen Action was put at the mercy of its funders (surely accounting in part for why the group so vigorously fought conservative "tort reform"). The national organization gained power, which some say was abused, particularly when it came to dealing with finances, sharing information and listening to state and local leaders. Very few Citizen Action contributors were members in any active or meaningful way.

Citizen Action came under investigation after Carey campaign aides arranged a Teamsters contribution to the group, then solicited campaign contributions from deep-pocketed Citizen Action backers. Former Teamsters political director William Hamilton was convicted in federal court in November on charges that he was part of the corrupt scheme, but no Citizen Action staff have been charged. Yet the investigation exacerbated internal tensions and prompted financial backers to pull out. "It shows what happens when you don't have internal democracy that builds confidence in the leaders," says John Cameron, who rebuilt Citizen Action of Illinois after it suffered its own financial crisis around the same time.

"Citizen Action was not a participatory democracy at all," agrees David Desiderato, associate director of Northeast Action. "It was controlled. You couldn't ask questions."

While many of the old Citizen Action leaders still strongly defend the organization, Blum insists that U.S. Action will be far more democratic, accountable and transparent. No more of the old budget sleight of hand that made Citizen Action so vulnerable. "I won't do it," he says. "None of us will do it. We're trying to make this an organization characterized by learning lessons."

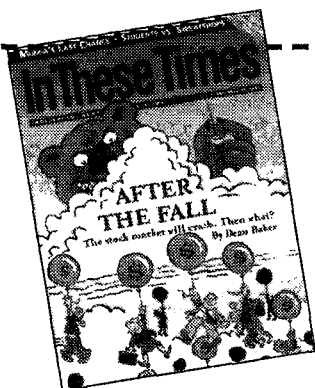
One lesson is that U.S. Action needs to devote attention to expanding the abilities of state organizations as well as pushing issue campaigns. Another is that U.S. Action can't simply be a conduit for other people's money and messages. In Citizen Action, McNary says, "instead of having a partnership with the people who gave us money, we were looked at as employees."

But to be a partner, the U.S. Action groups will have to generate funds independently of unions, foundations and lawyers, and they must have their own organized members, beyond those brought in by unions and others in their coalitions. As a first step, U.S. Action is insisting that all its state affiliates be substantial, citizen-based organizations. "It's important to be grounded in the state-based members," McNary says. "We ought to have a door-to-door canvass for our political presence, even if it doesn't make a dime. That's what separates us from a paper coalition or a think tank."

For all its shortcomings, Citizen Action made significant contributions to building a broad progressive movement that could influence mainstream politics at a time of conservative retrenchment. U.S. Action leaders hope the political terrain will be more fertile in the future. "Our political opportunities have been a lot more positive in recent years," says Richard Kersh, executive director of Citizen Action of New York. "I have a sense the tide is turning. The electorate is more open."

Some U.S. Action affiliates have already started working with SEIU on health care issues, and, at the founding convention, delegates pumped up their spirits with a lively protest at the district office of House Speaker Dennis Hastert, delivering empty pill bottles and demanding Medicare prescription coverage. SEIU executive board member Anna Burger, formerly president of a Citizen Action affiliate in Pennsylvania, is optimistic: "This is an organization that's going to make a difference." ■

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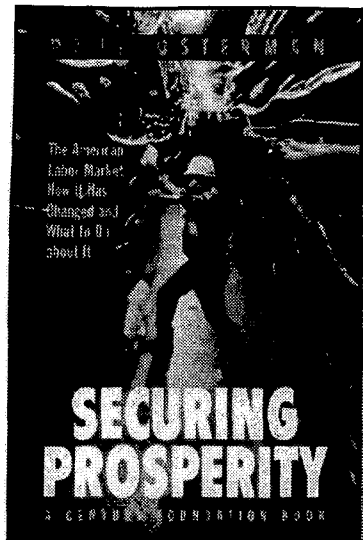
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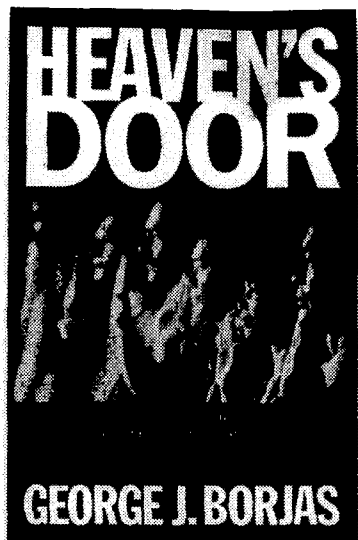
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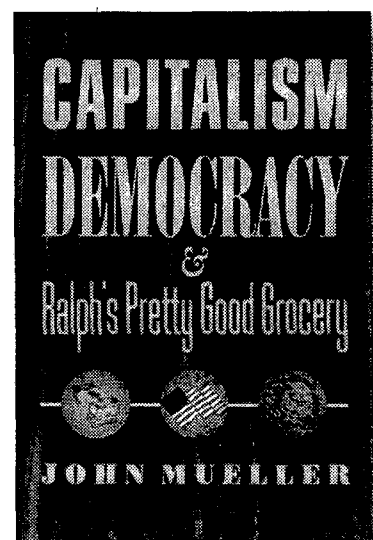
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A Private Truce

By Richard Hutson

It has been argued that the Western, which has little or no resonance today, was once the most explicitly "political" of all film genres, providing the terms by which American culture questioned the meaning of authority, the nature of law and order, the relations between outsiders and insiders, and the significance of community.

Ride with the Devil
Directed by Ang Lee

In particular, the great Westerns made in Hollywood after World War II reflected, perhaps even helped to construct, the ideology of Cold War America. Dwight Eisenhower, in his 1952 campaign for the presidency, claimed that "an analogy can be made, with some validity, between the life we lead today and that led by the American pioneers who made their homes, raised their families, plowed their fields, and lived a full life even under the never-ending threat of attack." The auras of contemporary relevance pervade the great Westerns of the Cold War era—*My Darling Clementine*, *Shane*, *High Noon*, to mention only a few.

Ang Lee's new film, *Ride with the Devil*, extends the tradition of the great Westerns to comment on the world of our own times. In this extraordinarily intelligent film, Lee and screenwriter-producer James Schamus update the story of the West by moving back to the Civil War era to explore the post-Cold War world of local wars and regional terrorism.

If Cold War Westerns posited heroes and enemies, *Ride with the Devil* sees everyone as both good and bad. Caught in local border skirmishes during the Missouri-Kansas troubles, a number of young men—Jake Roedel (Tobey Maguire), Jack Bull Chiles (Skeet Ulrich), Pitt Mackeson (Jonathon Rhys Meyers), George Clyde (Simon Baker) and Clyde's slave, Holt (Jeffrey Wright)—take up arms against the Yankees in guerrilla operations that take place on the edges of the Civil War.

There are rumors of a regular war, army against army, taking place somewhere else. But the conflict in the West is a war of ordinary people, neighbors against neighbors. In this situation, anyone, even a longtime friend, might turn out to be an enemy. There is little way of knowing who is on what side until the shooting starts. In Daniel Woodrell's novel, *Woe to Live On*—on which the screenplay is based—one of the characters says, "You have been trying to walk the neutral line, Mr. Evans, and it won't bear walking in this war."

The guerrillas in Lee's film see themselves as fighting for their way of life against a Yankee invasion. Mr. Evans, a planter, blames the violence of the war on Northern cultural imperialism. He points out that the Northerners who founded Lawrence, Kansas built a schoolhouse before they built a church. They rounded up every kid in the neighborhood and made them go to school, indoctrinating them with Yankee ideas of freedom, independence and capitalism. In Evans' view, the South can never win against such a culture machine, because the South only wants to be left alone.

Lee's direction is impressive in offering considerable ethnographic descriptions of Southern forms of civility, hospitality and manners. There are some wonderful scenes in modestly elegant plantations and especially in a muddy dugout, where the young rebels hole up during the winter break in the fighting. These chivalric boys with mud on their faces have very fine manners; they tip their hats to a lady, the young pretty widow, Sue Lee (the singer Jewel). "I'll show the lady to her mule," says the handsome, aristocratic

Jack Bull, as he escorts her from their hole in the hill.

Although historians after W.E.B. Du Bois have tended to discredit the claim that the Civil War should be primarily understood as the ideological and cultural invasion of the South by the North, Lee runs a certain risk in seeing the 1860s through a 1990s lens. But *Ride with the Devil* invites us to think about the present culture wars taking place here and throughout the world. There are protests and local wars all around the world against the Americanization, the modernization of local cultures. The Civil War was where it all started, where,



JOHN CLIFFORD

The Civil War, circa 1999.

according to Lee, "the Yankees won not only territory, but, in a sense, a victory for a whole way of life and of thinking." In this view, it was a victory that has relentlessly expanded to global proportions.

But Lee is more interested in the complicated self deceptions, partial knowledge and confused personal commitments that operate on the ground. It is difficult to know just why the young men in the film are fighting. They are vaguely aware that there is a "cause," something about slaves, but they fight for deeply personal reasons, for the friendships of families and school buddies. When federal troops kill Jack Bull's father, a plantation owner and close neighbor to the Roedels, the small group of sons takes off to seek revenge. The issue of the integrity of the Union seems too vague, although citizens in Missouri and Kansas line up on one side or the other—and are willing to kill people

who take up the other position, or are suspected of having a different opinion, or may only be related to someone who is known to have a different opinion.

Lee is not especially sentimental about the loss of the local culture before the onslaught of a new world of Yankee democracy and capitalism. In fact, it is the rebels who commit the most vicious and bloody attack. The film depicts the 1863 raid on Lawrence by William Quantrill, a Missourian fighting for the South, whose oratory, a weak-voiced, farcical version of Shakespeare's *Henry V*, rallies a large group of bushwhackers. Leading hundreds of men, their captains with death lists, Quantrill rides down upon the town in an epic swoop. Stationed there is a small company of federal troops, caught in their underwear, who offer little resistance. The local citizens offer even less. Quantrill's raiders sack the town and kill almost every man, while a number of his own gripe that he had promised them a "real war." Such an atrocity may have been common practice in 1862, but it is also depressingly contemporary.

Perhaps because Lee suspects how ambivalent his audience might be about guerrilla wars, he singles out the 19-year-old Jake, nicknamed "Dutchy," and the slave, Holt. They become the "heroes" of the narrative as fighters for a southern cause, but also objects of suspicion by their comrades. A slave fighting with the rebels is an obvious object of suspicion, but so is Jake, the

son of German immigrants, who, as a group, mainly sided with the Union. As objects of various forms of prejudice, Jake and Holt have their own ambivalences and can restrain their impulses to violence. But the sad fact of the matter is that any kind of idea, or any ethnicity, can serve as an excuse to hate and kill.

If one asks how such a conflict like this can end, the film offers something of a solution. There is Jake's shotgun wedding to Sue Lee, an implicit, albeit constrained, consent to the new order of things. And in a final encounter, Jake

and Pitt, who have been fighting together and have become enemies, have a showdown. Jake refuses to take advantage of a draw, letting the enemy "brother" ride away. This individual refusal to continue the killing may be a version of what Hemingway called a private truce. In our contemporary world, such private truces may be the only solution. Lee and Schamus offer their own version of a farewell to arms. ■

Richard Hutson teaches English and American studies at the University of California, Berkeley.

Madcap Grace

By G. Pascal Zachary

Jazz fans often don't bestow their full appreciation on a musician until after he or she is gone. Such may be the fate of Lester Bowie, a passionate and theatrical trumpet player best known as a member of the Art Ensemble of Chicago. Bowie died on Nov. 8 at the age of 58, leaving behind a trove of recorded work and three decades of performances in which he pointedly showed that jazz could be both serious art and fun.

Bowie came of age in the shadow of Miles Davis and John Coltrane, the giants of the '60s, the last time that

jazz possessed a critical edge and wide acclaim at the same time. Brooding and even surly, Davis turned against an older image of the smiling jazz man epitomized by the wisecracking Louis Armstrong. Coltrane, meanwhile, played searing solos with an expressionless face, presenting jazz as a near-mystical experience suitable perhaps only for the disembodied.

Bowie continued the artistic legacy of the jazz avant-garde but sought to return flair, fun and whimsy to a music that, in its formative years of the '20s and '30s, left plenty of listeners on their feet and

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laughing. On stage, he cut an arresting image, his thin face crowned by a flat-top haircut and a pointy goatee. He performed in a trademark white, ankle-length medical smock and spiced his solos with smears, growls, flutters and frenetic upper-register solos that recalled the earthy intonation of Bubber Miley, Duke Ellington's hot brass star of the '20s. While Bowie's style carried forward the great swing tradition of trumpet playing, he rebelled against "straight ahead" jazz and came to deride the classic jazz revival and its chief proponent, Wynton Marsalis. "With his chops and my brains I could have been one of the greatest," Bowie once said.

What Bowie lacked in technique, he made up for in style. Along with Art Ensemble cohorts Joseph Jarman and Roscoe Mitchell, Bowie unabashedly celebrated experimental music, creating one of the most durable jazz groups of the past 30 years. Art Ensemble performances were like a spiritual happening, with three of the group's members usually appearing in painted faces and African costumes. The music melded polyrhythmic elements—bells, gongs, sticks and drums—with atonal explorations and ferocious solos.

Bowie also led his own group, Brass Fantasy, and performed as part of an all-star quintet, The Leaders. But he is best remembered for his ingenious performances of pop tunes, notably "Hello Dolly," "The Great Pretender," and an unlikely marvel, "Howdy Doody Time." Schooled in rhythm and blues, Bowie served as the musical director for soul singer Fontella Bass (then his wife) when she scored the hit "Rescue Me."

Rather than turn his back on pop music, as some in the avant-garde did, Bowie found incongruous connections between the familiar and esoteric. What other jazz musician could lead a dozen brass instruments in a cover of Whitney Houston or Frank Sinatra's "My Way"? He also once recorded a funny series of trumpet solos, including the wonderfully titled "Miles Davis Meets Donald Duck." And his 1978 version of the nursery-rhyme "Three Blind Mice," in a duet with percussionist Philip Wilson, epitomized his clever, puckish way of turning the commonplace into a marauding romp through

Lester Bowie Selected Discography

Solo recordings:

Duet (Improvising Artists, 1978)
The Great Pretender (ECM, 1981)
Serious Fun (DIW, 1989)
The Organizer (ECM, 1991)
The Fire This Time (In & Out, 1992)

The Art Ensemble of Chicago:

Fanfare for the Warriors (Atlantic, 1973)
Urban Bushmen (ECM, 1980)
Dreaming of the Masters, vol. 2 (DIW, 1990)

The Leaders:

Out Here Like This (Black Saint, 1987)

the annals of gut-bucket and the frontiers of atonalism.

Other jazz names have died recently, notably Milt Jackson, the bop vibraphonist and cornerstone of the Modern Jazz Quartet. But Bowie's death has special significance. He was part of a lost generation in jazz: brilliant musicians, born in the early '40s, who rebelled against jazz traditions but still admired them. Many of this lost generation are still performing, though they don't get the attention paid to the

legendary jazz greats—Ellington, Armstrong, Charlie Parker, Sonny Rollins—or the young "lions" like Marsalis. In time, this will change because the music created by Bowie and contemporaries such as Henry Threadgill, Hamiet Bluiett and Pharoah Sanders will last.

Bowie could not always realize his ambitious vision of jazz as a vibrant, toe-tapping, even happy music that nonetheless eschewed clear melodies and embraced discordant experimentation and angry emotions. He failed, for instance, to create that seminal recording on which artistic reputations are secured (though his aptly titled 1989 recording *Serious Fun* and a 1992 live session, released as *The Fire This Time*, are memorable works). He never quit trying, however, performing even as he fought liver cancer. Risky music and a madcap grace were embodied in Bowie, who once told London's *Guardian* newspaper, "What worries me most about this jazz revival is that it's opened a new young audience up to jazz, and then bored them."

Listen to any Bowie recording, and the conclusion comes quickly: He never bores. ■

TATIANA CHIRKOVA
32 Moscow, Russia
118 lbs. 5' 3"
English: 3
Daughter: 7
Economist
University Graduate,
by Matti Allison from
her Mail Order Brides
series. Part of the
fiveplusone
exhibition at sixspace
gallery, Chicago.



Holiday Reading

Punk Rock Girls

Sue is a 15-year-old girl—but she's not that stereotypically boy-crazy, giggly teen-ager. "I consider myself to be intelligent," she says, "but not educated fully. And also, I'm rather small. I'm extremely defensive, and I want to argue politics. I will argue politics until the day I die."

For spending money and to save up for college, Sue works in retail. She used to work as a model—until she shaved most of her head, dyed her remaining hair green and glued a six-inch mohawk on top. Sue may be rebelling, but she's finding her own voice in the process.

Many feminist studies have focused on how the media and popular culture victimize teen-age girls. Puberty hits, and a once confident and assertive child often plummets into desperately low self-esteem, passivity and periodic depression. Finally, a book has come along that looks at how teenage girls are subvert-

and often more emotionally healthy than the typical teen-ager.

At the same time, punk girls face stereotypes of sluttiness—and, as a result, greater harassment—as well as antisocial behavior. But through the influence of punk's aggression and energy, girls are tougher in the face of criticism and often thrive off it. Leblanc's smart, entertaining read shows that punk's not dead and we're all the better for it.

Another woman injecting some punk into feminism is Maggie Estep. Known for her nervy spoken-word performances like "I'm the Sex Goddess of the Western Hemisphere," Estep has toured indie clubs, briefly opened for Hole, and performed at Lollapalooza. Her fed-up, borderline psychotic rants have chronicled a young woman struggling to make sense out of her inner tug-of-war between sexual independence and emotional commitment.

With her new book, *Soft Maniacs*, Estep has grown up. This collection of interwoven short stories focuses loosely on two women, Jody, a nymphomaniac psychiatrist, and Katie, an emotionally chilly daughter of a circus lion tamer. The women move through a series of failed relationships, each time grasping for a content domestic life that eschews the traps of mediocrity and boredom. In each episode, narrated by the men involved with them, the two women are alternately tender and terrifying. But Estep is optimistic. If we can stop obsessing over and get beyond our sexual demons, a relationship between a man and a woman isn't so suffocating after all. It's the emptiness that confines us.

Kristin Kolb

Direct Action

Work hard, don't bitch, and, whatever you do, please don't mooch off the government. Such are the industrious dicta central to all capitalist

mythology, from Horatio Alger to Rush Limbaugh. So why, when so many dispossessed people try to do just that, are they evicted from their homes, robbed of everything they own, and sometimes even hunted down by death squads? Simple: They're squatting.

No Trespassing: Squatting, Rent Strikes and Land Struggles Worldwide
By Anders Corr
South End Press
244 pages, \$18

Anders Corr's *No Trespassing: Squatting, Rent Strikes and Land Struggles Worldwide* takes a long look at this central paradox to life under capitalism, where corporations are lavishly rewarded for what, in all too many cases, is not much more than wide-scale organized theft—and entire classes are outlawed for trying to take back some measure of what has been stolen from them.

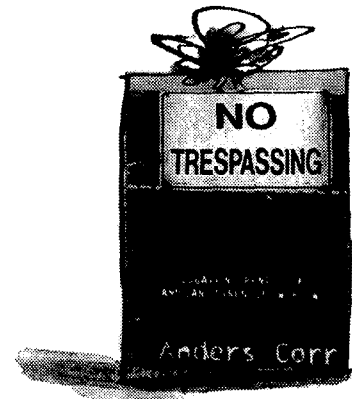
One of Corr's many cases in point is the community of Tacamiche, Honduras, where in 1994 hundreds of landless peasants occupied neglected property owned by the notorious banana exporter

Pretty in Punk: Girls' Gender Resistance in a Boys' Subculture
By Lauraine Leblanc
Rutgers University Press
286 pages, \$20

Soft Maniacs
By Maggie Estep
Simon & Schuster
220 pages, \$21

ing these pressures, Lauraine Leblanc's *Pretty in Punk: Girls' Gender Resistance in a Boys' Subculture*.

Leblanc, a punk rocker turned sociologist, spent two years traveling around Canadian and American cities to find out how punk girls perceive gender in a boy-dominated scene. She talked to Sue and some 40 other girls—all assertive, political, scoffing at mainstream ideas of beauty and femininity,



Chiquita Brands International (on whose behalf the United States has orchestrated various coups throughout Central America this century). Over the course of a year and a half, the peasants, without any government charity, built for themselves a functioning village, including a school, health center and three churches, and made the land—which Chiquita had abandoned as a strike-busting tactic—productive again.

After surviving one eviction attempt when police tried to chase them out with

tear gas, rubber bullets and baseball bats, Tacamiche briefly became something of an international *cause célèbre* and an inspiration to other ongoing land occupations in the region. It was clear that presenting the villagers with one vacate deadline after another only encouraged deeper entrenchment and popular support for the squat. This was enough to get the Honduran state—like most Third World governments, eager to appear friendly to international business—very worried. So without warning in February 1996, Chiquita moved in with 400 of its own hired thugs and 500 Honduran soldiers.

Overnight, the goons arrested 100 Tacamiches, bulldozed all of their crops and buried the entire village—except the schoolhouse, which was left as a base for an armed garrison to prevent anyone from returning. The U.S. ambassador, sounding more like a viceroy than a diplomat, approvingly noted that “the government has complied with the law, since the land is the property of [Chiquita].”

It is precisely that distortion of “property” that motivates Corr’s tough, erudite book. As Corr notes, for John Locke, the pre-eminent Enlightenment theorist of property, common land became private when someone “mixed his labor with it, and joined to it something that is his own.” In the meaningful sense of the word, then, the property at Tacamiche belonged to the hard-working villagers—not absentee Chiquita executives—who cultivated the land from “the state that Nature hath provided and left it in.” The same is true of squats all over the world, from New York City to the Brazilian hinterland, where ordinary people in desperate situations turn to extraordinary means—and carve a living out of what was once derelict.

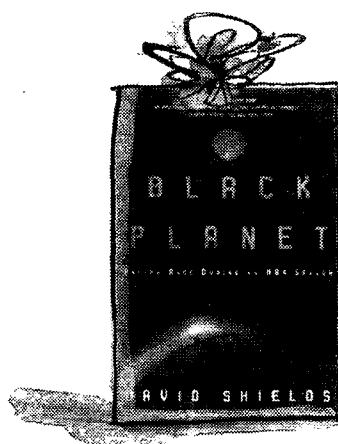
There is much to admire in this book, from the artfully reported late-night heroics of San Francisco’s Homes Not Jails, whose members surreptitiously scope out abandoned buildings and quietly house the homeless, to the eminently practical chapter on strategies for achieving a permanent end to the various forms of modern feudalism. If you’re sick of doing nothing armchair radicalism and liberal hand-wringing over poverty, turn to Corr’s book, a rich mixture of reportage, philosophical rigor and concrete advice for action.

Joe Knowles

Basketball Diary

The most anxious moment in last year’s otherwise uneventful NBA Finals was New York Knick forward Larry Johnson’s now infamous press conference in which he described himself and his teammates as “rebellious slaves.”

For just a moment, Johnson pierced the league’s illusion of racial harmony. The country’s sportswriters flipped. How dare a man with an \$84 million-dollar contract complain about racial inequality? Just shut up and play, they sneered.



That Johnson was shouted down should be no surprise. When it comes to sports, particularly basketball, nobody wants to talk about race. As David Shields writes in his new book, *Black Planet: Facing Race During an NBA Season*: “The NBA is a place where, without ever acknowledging

Black Planet: Facing Race During an NBA Season
By David Shields
Crown
223 pages, \$23

it—and because it’s never acknowledged, it’s that much more potent and telling—white fans and black players enact and quietly explode virtually every racial issue and tension in the culture at large. Race, the league’s taboo topic, is the league’s true subject.”

Shields, a novelist and professor of English at the University of Washington, spent the 1994-1995 NBA season following his hometown Seattle SuperSonics. He set out to write not about strategy and shooting percentages, but “how the game gets discussed.” Since no

one wants to talk about race, though, Shields mostly ends up talking to himself. But surprisingly, this year-long monologue, presented in the form of a daily diary, yields some fascinating insights as he deconstructs our ongoing, unspoken racial conversation.

Consider this snippet of on-the-air banter between Sonics broadcasters Kevin Calabro, a white play-by-play man, and color commentator Marques Johnson, a black former NBA player:

Calabro: I went into a country-and-western bar in Dallas—the whole country bar scene. And they were dancing country to Snoop Doggy Dogg.

Johnson: I went into a redneck bar and they all turned around to look at me. The whole place went silent, and I said, “Somebody call a cab?”

To Shields, Calabro’s parable is a clumsy attempt to connect to the black experience, to be accepted, to seem cool. Johnson’s response: spare me your parables. “If an exchange exists that registers more exactly the current state of American race relations,” Shields writes, “I’d like to hear it.”

Shields delves into the unusual hold black athletes have on the white psyche, especially his own. He spends much of the book exorcising his own obsessive identification with the Sonics’ phenomenal, trash-talking point guard, Gary Payton. He writes: “G. Payton is utterly narcissistic, utterly self-referential, but (and?) somehow I adore whatever he does.”

Payton is the angry, cool outsider Shields wishes he could be. Of course, Shields is just projecting. But herein lies the complicated relationship between white fans and black players. Historically, whites treated blacks as subhuman; now they treat them as superhuman. Is that an improvement? Whatever happened to equal?

Shields doesn’t offer any answers, and ultimately the book suffers a bit from too much navel-gazing. But in his meditations, Shields sinks the myth that we are achieving better race relations through entertainment. As Salim Muwakkil has written, sports is just a diversion. The real work of racial reconciliation remains.

Craig Aaron

Classifieds

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stuff out there...
too MUCH INFOR-
MATION. I'll
Get A PALM
PILOT, but that's
the END. PLEASE
Put A STOP TO
ADVANCES IN
TECHNOLOGY.



WHAT IF
I JUST
MAKE YOU
NOT CARE?

I
Like
THAT.
When
Does
it
START?



Continued from page 30

The ACLU strategy would be to show that Lennon was subject to surveillance as part of an effort to monitor political opponents of the Nixon administration, rather than because he was a legitimate law enforcement concern.

The government claimed it was investigating Lennon because of his involvement with the Election Year Strategy Information Center (EYSIC)—an organization dedicated to defeating Nixon led by two members of the Chicago Seven, Jerry Rubin and Rennie Davis—to which Lennon had contributed \$75,000. FBI files indicated that EYSIC disbanded on March 1, 1972, yet 27 documents postdated that event.

"So this has nothing to do with a continuing investigation of a relationship between John Lennon and EYSIC," argued the ACLU. In fact, those documents "don't concern themselves with enforcement of the Anti-Riot Act, they concern themselves with statements being made at INS hearings ... and 'how can we get John Lennon out of the country before the Republican convention?'"

Vincent Schiano, the INS chief trial attorney in charge of deporting Lennon, had orchestrated the deportation cases of such biggies as mob boss Carlo Gambino, happy hooker Xavier Hollander, former Nazi Hermine Braunsteiner Ryan and IRA revolutionary Joe Cahill. *Rolling Stone* reported that after the Lennon case, Schiano left the INS, protesting that he was given carte blanche in the Lennon case but was given no power to go after former Nazis.

Ten days after Lennon's visa was revoked, the New York FBI office sent an urgent teletype to J. Edgar Hoover, reporting that Lennon had won a delay in his deportation, that he would "fight a narcotics conviction in England," and that if he "wins overthrow of British narcotic conviction, INS will reconsider their attempts to deport Lennon."

Hoover died in May 1972, a month after he sent a letter to H.R. Haldeman at the White House about this "former member of the Beatles singing group," warning of his "avowed intention to engage in disruptive activities." The entire text was withheld, but since Haldeman was Nixon's chief of staff, this letter would have served as blatant proof that the investigation of Lennon was totally political.

For 14 years, the FBI withheld four lines of a document: "For information of Bureau, NYCPD [New York City Police Department] narcotics division is aware of subject's recent use of narcotics and are attempting to obtain enough information to arrest both subject and wife Yoko based on PD investigation." He told me how strangers kept trying to give him drugs.

In July 1972, while I was getting stoned with John and Yoko at my office in San Francisco, the Miami office of the FBI was contacted by the New York office: "Miami should note that Lennon is reportedly a 'heavy user of narcotics.' ... This information should be emphasized to local Law Enforcement Agencies covering MIREP [FBI code for the

convention], with regards to subject being arrested if at all possible on possession of narcotics charges."

The FBI even printed a flier for distribution to local law enforcement agencies in Miami to facilitate the arrest of Lennon. However, the flier featured a photo of a Lower East Side musician, David Peel, with a speech balloon announcing his record, *The Pope Smokes Dope*.

In September 1972, the government declassified secrets of

H-bomb design, but still kept dozens of pages in the Lennon files confidential, stored in locked containers inside locked strong rooms within secure buildings in fenced facilities patrolled by armed guards.

In December 1972, a month after Nixon had been re-elected, the Lennon files ended. The FBI had inserted an asterisk adjacent to the symbol

John Lennon's FBI files reveal such dangers to national security as "Yoko can't even remain on key."



number on many documents whenever "the source of the information was not a person but an illegal investigative technique." This whole case was, in Wiener's words, a "rock 'n' roll Watergate."

Yoko and John spent that weekend at my home—situated on a cliff overlooking an almost deserted beach—in Watsonville, south of San Francisco. They loved being so close to the ocean. In the afternoon, I asked them to smoke their cigarettes outside. But in the evening, we smoked a combination of marijuana and opium, sitting on pillows in front of the fireplace, sipping tea and munching cookies.

At one point, I referred to Mae Brussell as a saint.

"She's not a saint," John said. "You're not a saint. I'm not a saint. Yoko's not a saint. Nobody's a saint."

We talked about the Charles Manson case, which I had been investigating. Lennon was bemused by the way Manson had associated himself with Beatles songs.

"Look," John said, "would you kindly inform Manson that it was Paul who wrote 'Helter Skelter,' not me."

Yoko said, "No, please don't tell him. We don't want to have any communication with Manson."

"It's all right," John said. "He doesn't have to know the message came from us."

"It's getting chilly in here," Yoko said to me. "Would you put another cookie in the fireplace?"

We talked about Mae's theory that the deaths of musicians like Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison and Otis Redding had actually been political assassinations because those performers served as role models, surfing on the crest of youth rebellion.

"No, no," John argued, "they were already headed in a self-destructive direction." A few months later, he would remind me of that conversation and add, "Listen, if anything happens to Yoko and me, it was not an accident."

Such was the level of his understandable paranoia. For now, though, we were simply stoned in Watsonville, discussing conspiracy theory, safe at my oasis.

John was absentmindedly holding onto the joint. I asked, "Do the British use that expression, 'to bogart a joint,' or is that only an American term, you know, derived from the image of a cigarette dangling from Humphrey Bogart's lower lip?"

"In England," he replied, with an inimitably sly expression, "if you remind somebody else to pass a joint, you lose your own turn."

A few months previously—in early March 1972—a paid FBI informant, Julie Maynard, traveled from Madison, Wisconsin with a local activist, Jane Hopper, to meet with antiwar movement leaders in New York City. Here is an excerpt from Julie's FBI report on Jane: "She went over to Rex Weiner's house. He is the editor of the *New York Ace*, which is an up and coming underground paper. He seems to be an old political hand. He was very glad to see us and proposed a party that night to welcome us to New York, at his newspaper office. The party started at about 9 p.m., so Hopper had time to go eat at Tom Forcade's house. He lives in a real dump. ... He has no legitimate phone. To call out he taps into a Hungarian person's phone.

"There is a girl there named Linda who acts as a servant for Tom and [his roommate] Frank. Linda's parrot interjects 'right on' whenever the conversation gets rousing. Tom is trying to train it to say 'eat shit' whenever he argues with anyone, but the bird now says it to him whenever he sees him. The cage is surrounded by small objects that Tom has thrown in response. From there Hopper went to the party. She was introduced to the elite of the radical left."

Presumably, this document had been blacked out in its entirety, not because Forcade tried to teach a parrot to say "eat shit," but rather because the report concluded with a crucial piece of information—Lennon had announced that he would come to the convention only if it was peaceful—thus contradicting the FBI's justification for investigating him.

This report from Maynard was filed 10 days after Hoover's warning to Nixon of Lennon's "avowed intention to engage in disruptive activities." Moreover, in May 1971, a confidential FBI document about Lennon's appearance on the *Dick Cavett Show* reported that "Lennon declared he would not participate in antiwar activities at the Republican National Convention."

Other released documents reveal such dangers to national security as "Mike Drobenare is using his parents' car again," "Alex is still in NYC and is growing a full beard" and "Yoko can't even remain on key."

For the first time in 14 years, Yoko Ono recently commented publicly on the FBI files. "I was there," she told the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*. "I knew all that, John was not being Communist or being violent or anything like that. It was obvious to all of us. It was kind of surprising, I think. We were being bugged, so we knew they were after us. I think it's nice that they're releasing [the files] now. It's due to the fact that the then-government and the now-government are totally different."

And now, if you'll excuse me, I have to put another cookie in the fireplace. ■

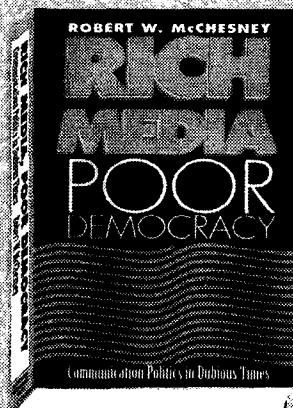
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John, Yoko the FBI and Me

By Paul Krassner

No wonder Mae Brussell was so excited. The attempted burglary of Democratic headquarters at the Watergate Hotel in Washington D.C. on June 17, 1972, suddenly had brought her eight-and-a-half years of dedicated conspiracy research to an astounding climax. She recognized names, modus operandi, patterns of cover-up. She could trace linear connections leading inevitably from the assassination of John F. Kennedy to the Watergate break-in.

Three weeks later—while President Richard Nixon was pressing for the postponement of an investigation until after the election, and the mainstream press was still referring to the incident as a “caper” and a “third-rate burglary”—Mae completed a long article for my magazine, *The Realist*, revealing the conspiracy and delineating the players, from the burglars all the way up to FBI Director L. Patrick Gray, Attorney General John Mitchell and Nixon.

Mae documented the details of a plot so insidious and yet so logical that we naively believed her article could forestall Nixon's re-election. The typesetter even wrote “Bravo!” at the end of Mae's manuscript. However, instead of my usual credit arrangement, the printer insisted on \$5,000 in advance before the issue could go to press. I didn't have the money, and I had no idea how I would get it. But as I left the printing plant, I was filled with an inexplicable sense of confidence.

When I got home, the phone rang. It was Yoko Ono. She and John Lennon were visiting San Francisco, and they invited me to lunch. The Nixon administration had been trying to deport Lennon, ostensibly for an old marijuana bust in England, but really because they wanted to prevent him from performing free for protesters at the Republican convention that summer, which would have attracted several thousand young people who were for the music and against the war.

I brought the galleys of Mae's article to the restaurant. Her account of the government's motivation and methodology provided a context for the harassment of John and Yoko. When I mentioned my printer's ultimatum, no persuasion was necessary; they immediately took me to the bank and withdrew \$5,000 cash.

This occurred so precisely when I needed the money that my personal boundaries of coincidence were stretched to infinity. I could rationalize my ass off—after all, John and

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She went over to
New York Ave which is an up and
seems to be an old political ha-
and proposed a party that n-
has news office. The par-
He has no legit-
into a person's

There is a girl there named
Tommy roommate Frank. I-
the conversation
it is by “Eat shit”
the bird gives it to him
st- all objects
From the
the el-

Yoko had been driving across the country, and they just happened to arrive at the particular moment of my need—but the timing was so exquisite that, for me, coincidence and mysticism became the same process.

When Jon Wiener was writing a biography of Lennon, *Come Together*, he tried to obtain Lennon's FBI files, but some 200 documents were withheld because, it was alleged, their release would endanger national security. What little Wiener managed to obtain included pages that were fully blacked out. After a 14-year legal battle that went all the way to the Supreme Court, the FBI agreed to release all but 10 documents and to pay \$204,000 to the ACLU for court costs and attorney fees.

Now, Wiener's *Gimme Some Truth* (University of California Press) tells the story of that struggle. His book—dedicated to Mark Rosenbaum and Dan Marmalefsky, the lawyers who paved the path to that victory—chronicles Lennon's legal commitment to test the political potential of rock music, and documents the government's illegal efforts to stop him.

Before Wiener met with the ACLU attorneys, their main concern was his agenda. “Was I some kind of obsessed fan?” he writes. “Or perhaps a burned-out hippie, living in the past? Or a conspiracy buff, eager to prove Reagan had ordered Lennon's assassination?” They were relieved to find that he was a history professor seeking the Lennon files as part of his research.

Continued on page 28

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